

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 HA-05 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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HA:EJONES
-----023467 190807Z /10
R 181854Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 126516

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PK, US, PEPR, SHUM

SUBJECT:PRESS COVERAGE OF ARREST OF JOURNALISTS

1. MAY 16 WASHINGTON POST CARRIES AP STORY DATED
ISLAMABAD THAT ADDITIONAL NEWSPAPER EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN
SENTENCED TO PRISON, AND SEVERAL WERE FLOGGED, FOR VIO-
LATING BAN ON PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS.

2. THERE HAS BEEN SPORADIC AND GENERALLY LOW-KEY MEDIA
COVERAGE HERE OF CONFRONTATION OVER MUSAWAT CLOSING.
IT HAS GENERATED CONCERN REGARDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS
SITUATION, SPECIFICALLY FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND "INHUMAN
PUNISHMENTS" IN PAKISTAN.

3. FOLLOWING GUIDANCE WAS PREPARED FOR MAY 17 NOON
BRIEFING BUT WAS NOT USED.

QUOTE:
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Q: WHAT IS THE DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO THE ARREST OF
THE PAKISTANI JOURNALISTS, WITH 45 RECEIVING JAIL SEN-
TENCES AND 4 BEING SENTENCED TO BE PUBLICLY FLOGGED?

A: AS YOU KNOW, WE SUPPORT THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND
THE RIGHT OF JOURNALISTS TO PRACTICE THEIR PROFESSION

EVERYWHERE.

WE STILL DO NOT HAVE THE FULL FACTS ON THIS CASE, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THE ARRESTS WERE MADE IN CONNECTION WITH A DEMONSTRATION FOLLOWING THE CLOSING OF A LAHORE NEWSPAPER.

WE ARE LOOKING INTO THE MATTER TO DETERMINE WHAT APPROPRIATE ACTION WE MIGHT TAKE.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THE PUBLIC FLOGGINGS?

A: WHILE WE ROCOGNIZE THAT LEGAL SYSTEMS DIFFER, SUCH PUNISHMENT IS FOREIGN TO OUR OWN SYSTEM AND VALUES AND WE THEREFORE REGRET ITS USE. UNQUOTE.

4. WE SUGGEST THAT YOU MAKE OUR CONCERNS ON THE ARREST AND FLOGGING OF JOURNALISTS KNOWN AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL IN THE GOP. WE WILL APPRECIATE YOUR VIEWS ON WHAT OTHER ACTIONS MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE IN THIS MATTER. VANCE

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Message Attributes

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